



National Medicare Education Program (NMEP) Partnership Questions & Answers



What is the National Medicare Education Program?

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 created new health care options, called Medicare + Choice, for the millions of Americans who rely on Medicare. Just as important, Medicare beneficiaries now have new preventive health benefits and new patient protections. To help beneficiaries make more informed choices, the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) is initiating an extensive education program.

Who are the NMEP partners and what do they do?

A variety of organizations—associations, advocacy groups, corporations, State and local government offices, employers, and unions—are involved in the NMEP. They receive updated information from the Health Care Financing Administration and are involved in ongoing communications efforts that reach Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and care providers.

What resources are available to beneficiaries?

- **Medicare & You Materials**—*Medicare & You 2000* is HCFA's primary Medicare publication. The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 mandates that general and plan comparison information be mailed to all current Medicare beneficiaries by October 15 of each year, beginning in 1999. The customer market includes all current domestic Medicare beneficiaries (United States and Puerto Rico) with valid ZIP Codes as well as those who will enroll in Medicare during the year. In addition, customers include those who act on the behalf of beneficiaries, such as adult children, and HCFA partners and contractors, such as Regional Offices, State Health Insurance Programs (SHIPs), Carriers, Physician Review Organizations (PROs), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and so forth.

- **www.medicare.gov**—Documents and items found on the www.medicare.gov Web site include basic information about Medicare; managed care plan comparisons (Medicare Compare); nursing home comparison information (Nursing Home Compare); and wellness information, State contact information, and beneficiary publications that can be viewed or downloaded and printed.

Comparison information and State contact information is updated at least quarterly to provide access to the most current data.

- **Toll-Free Phone Line**—The Medicare toll-free number, 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is staffed by customer service representatives from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday. At other times the telephone line provides pre-recorded information. The customer service representative helps answer questions related to Medicare health

plan choices, processes requests for plan comparison information and plan disenrollment forms, and makes referrals to other information sources where appropriate. The service accommodates both English and Spanish-speaking callers and also offers a TTY line (telecommunications device for the deaf and hearing impaired): 1-877-486-2048.

What resources are available to NMEP partners?

HCFA has created the NMEP Partners Web site to provide timely information to members of the NMEP Alliance Network. The Partners Web site, at www.medicare.gov/nmep, supports communication and collaboration with HCFA and other NMEP partners by offering a variety of specialized tools. Other features of the Web site include a news service that relays breaking stories on Medicare and related issues; and downloadable and reproducible materials to help partners educate beneficiaries.

What can NMEP partners and their affiliates and members do to help increase awareness and understanding of new Medicare choices among beneficiaries?

1. Refer beneficiaries and others who work with beneficiaries to the available *Medicare & You* resources for help with their questions.
2. Look for more information and resources in [name of organizational publication].
3. Download materials from www.medicare.gov/nmep for distribution to beneficiaries and others who can help them.

How can an organization participate in the NMEP?

To participate as an NMEP partner, please contact Linda Levin at 410-786-4616 or LLevin@hcfa.gov.